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House Passes Istook Parental Consent Measure to Appropriations Bill

Washington, D.C. - Today the House of Representatives passed an amendment, XXX-XXX, to require parental consent before federal funds are used to provide a minor with contraceptives, treatment for sexually-transmitted diseases, or counseling on sex-related issues. The measure, authored by Rep. Ernest J. Istook (R-Okla.), was attached to the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill for 1997.

The federal program is commonly known as "Title X" (Title Ten) of the Public Health Service Act. Each year, approximately one-third of Title X's recipients are teenagers who receive services without parental knowledge or consent. This totals about 1.3 million teens each year. Although supporters claim it decreases out-of-wedlock and teen pregnancies, federal statistics prove the out-of-wedlock birthrate for American teenagers has doubled since Title X began in 1970. (Source: National Center for Health Statistics) Although it is labeled a program for the poor, federal regulations have made it available to almost all teenagers.

"Teenage pregnancies have *doubled* since Title X started," stated Istook. **"The program doesn't work, because it encourages teens to have sex without expecting consequences. That's an invitation to disaster, and sure enough it has helped to double teen pregnancies.**

"Even worse, it is wrong for the federal government to help teens evade their parents on moral issues," continued Istook. **"It's not right for the government to bypass parents, and provide free contraceptives. This federal program invites our children to hide their behavior from their parents. It cuts them off from their best source of help and guidance on moral issues, namely their families. Parents, not government, know what's best for their children."**

"Schools need parents' okay to give aspirin to students, but Uncle Sam will give them birth control without parental consent," said Istook. **"Minors can't have their ears pierced on their own, or go on a field trip without a note, but when it comes to sex, government bypasses the parents. It's been going on for 26 years, thanks to Title X. It has helped devastate the moral fiber of America and it's time that this stopped."**

The amendment includes a provision permitting state legislatures to opt out of the parental consent requirement. As Istook noted, the Title X program is federally-funded, but states traditionally have decided the boundaries for parental consent regarding their children's health care. (The current Title X program overrides states laws.) In addition, Istook included a "judicial bypass" provision for cases of abuse.

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as the principal authority side-stepped parents to play an active role advising teens on they're taking by being sexually active, of the harmful effects of sexually-transmitted diseases,. gives government-funded block grants to agencies that provide